

MEMORANDUM
ON THE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE
SUPREME BOARD OF HEALTH,
OF THE
CITY OF MEXICO.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SECOND PAN-AMERICAN
MEDICAL CONGRESS.

TRANSLATED
BY
W. THOMPSON.

Mexico, November 1896.

PRINTED BY F. P. HOECK.
First San Francisco Street No. 12.

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ORGANIZATION

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SUPREME BOARD OF HEALTH.

IN accordance with the provisions of the Sanitary Code of the United States of Mexico, which came into force in the month of August 1891, and in accordance with the subsequent provisions of the Decree, issued by the Executive of the Union on the 15th of November, 1894, the staff of the Public Health Service, is at present organized as follows:—

For the Sanitary service of the Federal District, there is a Supreme Board of Health, which is formed of 11 members, of whom five are civil physicians, the Director of the Military Hospital of Instruction, the Professor of Hygiene in the National School of Medicine, a Veterinary Surgeon, a Pharmacist, a Lawyer and an Engineer.

Under the immediate orders of the Board, there are eight Medical Ward Inspectors, four outside Medical Inspectors for the Districts of Tacubaya, Guadalupe Hidalgo, Tlalpam and Xochimilco, all of which form the Federal District; four Analytical Chemists attached to the Inspection of food and drinks; an Assistant, for the Bacteriological Laboratory; a Curator of Vaccine; two Auxiliary Physicians for that Department; four Vaccine agents for the Eight Police Stations of the City and a Chief of the Disinfection Service.

The Sanitary Service of the Territories, consists of a Medical Inspector in Tepic, and another in Lower California, who is at the same time Sanitary Delegate in the Port of La Paz.

As besides being charged with the Sanitary Administration of the Federal District and Territories, the Supreme Board of Health also has charge of Sanitary questions within the Federal jurisdiction, it fulfills those important functions through the following delegations:

In the Gulf of Mexico: in Matamoros, Tampico, Tuxpam, Veracruz, Coatzacoalcos, Frontera, Laguna del Carmen, Campeche and Progreso.

On the Pacific Coast: in San Benito, Salina Cruz, Acapulco, Manzanillo, San Blas, Mazatlan, Guaymas, Santa Rosalía, Todos Santos, Tonalá and Puerto Angel.

The Sanitary Service on the Frontier is looked after by three Veterinary Inspectors, who are distributed in Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Porfirio Diaz and Laredo.

The many labors that have to be undertaken by the Supreme Board of Health in accordance with the Sanitary Code, are fulfilled by the aid of 23 Committees, which are formed out the members composing that body. These Committees are:

1. Administration and Regulation of the Sanitary Staff.
2. Matters of Federal Jurisdiction.
3. Dwelling houses & Schools; subdivided into two: 1st and 2nd of Dwelling houses.
4. Food and Drinks.
5. Churches, theatres and other places of meeting.
6. Factories and industries.
7. Wholesale and Retail Drugstores.
8. Practice of Medicine.
9. Inhumations and Exhumations.
10. Epidemiology.
11. Epizootics.
12. Dairies, Slaughter Houses, Meats imported from outside the City and other police matters connected with animals.
13. Prisons, Hospitals and Asylums.
14. Markets.
15. Garbage heaps.
16. Military Hygiene.
17. Vaccination.
18. Sanitary Inspection.
19. Statistics.
20. Bacteriology.
21. Public Works.

22. Judicial Questions.

23. Publications.

A short statement will be enough to give a knowledge of the forms under which the principal Committees of those above mentioned work, and from this sketch it will be easy to infer the practice of the others, according to the branches which are under their control.

The Committee on Federal Questions, which looks after everything connected with Maritime Health, examines the numerous documents which have to be forwarded from the delegates of the Board, in the different ports of the Republic, and which documents minutely detail all the information referring to the visits which they have to pay to in-coming vessels; everything relating to their Bills of Health; the decisions which are given when this document is not satisfactory, the form of disinfection to which the vessels, passengers and merchandise are subjected, whenever the Sanitary Laws require it, and everything concerning the *Quarantine*, whether it be rigorous or simply for *observation*.

With these documents and with those that are issued by the Delegates after visiting the out-going vessels, and which refer to their Sanitary Condition, as well as that of the passengers, crews, and an examination of the merchandise carried on board, the Committee forms a general report, which is presented for the information of the Department of the Interior.

This Committee is that which studies and decides all matters connected with Maritime Health, and its resolutions are always of the greatest importance, because they show the watchfulness with which the public is protected against the introduction of epidemic or infectious diseases into the Republic; and therefore this is the Committee which has charge of International Sanitation.

The two Committees on dwelling houses, study the information found in the reports which are rendered by the Sanitary Ward Inspectors, as to the causes of ill health which they have discovered in their domiciliary visits; in accordance with the Sanitary Laws they decide on the works and improvements which are to be undertaken by the proprietors, in order to place their buildings in good hygienic conditions, ordering after the termination of the period which is granted in every case, that a fresh inspection be made of the houses, so as to determine the fines that are to be imposed, should the proprietor fail in the exact compliance of the orders that have been given.

In the latter case, and after the lapse of the fresh term which is

granted to the proprietor for the execution of the work that has been ordered, a fresh inspection is made, and in view of the report presented by the Sanitary Inspector, a decision is given, either that the works so ordered have been executed wholly or in part, or that they have not as yet been commenced. If through the absolute non-compliance of the orders given by the Committee, a fresh fine is imposed, which in this case would be for a larger amount, and if after the lapse of the fresh term granted, and in view of the fact that the penalties imposed do not in any way relieve the proprietor of his obligations to improve the hygienic conditions of his buildings, he still is a delinquent, the inspections are repeated with their respective reports, until the Committee obtains the exact fulfillment of the orders given, and by this method of procedure a great improvement has been obtained in a considerable number of houses in Mexico City, whose Sanitary conditions are much better than they used to be.

An exactly similar procedure is followed with the complaints that are sent in with respect to the bad hygienic conditions of certain dwellings, complaints which are sent to the Supreme Board of Health by the tenants of the houses that are in bad condition, and which are entered into a book that is kept by the Secretary for that special purpose. The Committees on dwellings, at once give the proper orders with respect to every complaint that is brought before them, and their decisions are communicated to the Sanitary Inspector every day.

The Committees on Factories and Industries, take turns in visiting the establishments that are about to be opened, on receipt of the petitions which the proprietors address to the District Government, and of which the latter notifies the Board.

Once the visit is made, and bearing in mind the detailed report which is rendered in every case, specifying if the legal requisites have been fulfilled and giving an opinion as to the importance of those which have been omitted, the Board then determines whether it will grant or refuse the petitions presented by the owners.

The same inspection is carried out whenever any complaint is received as to the existing establishments, whenever the Committees consider it necessary, or the Board should so order it, because it is considered desirable for the public health.

The Committee on Drugstores, makes regular and frequent visits of inspection to all the Wholesale and Retail Drugstores that

are found in the City, and in the principal towns of the District, exercising the greatest vigilance and the greatest severity in order to correct and punish, as may be necessary, the infringements that may be discovered against the special Regulations in force.

Thanks to the activity and perseverance with which these inspections have been carried out, it is now an established rule that every such establishment shall always have a responsible Pharmacist employed; that the preparation of prescriptions is carefully attended to; that they are all provided with the substances, apparatus and utensils which are required by the Regulations, and that the watchfulness and inspection on the part of the Professor, is constant and efficacious.

The Committee on inhumations, exhumations and removal of bodies, takes care that in the actual cemeteries all the demands of Hygienic are properly complied with; it visits and reports on all cases which are referred to it by the Board, respecting the opening of new cemeteries, as well as on anything relating to premature or judicial exhumations.

The Committee on Epidemiology, receives the notice which all physicians are obliged to give whenever they attend any persons who are attacked by infecto-contagious diseases, it at once advises the Sanitary Inspecting Physician who has charge of that part of the City, so that he can visit the patient, and above all things ascertain that he is properly isolated or otherwise advise his removal to the Hospital, which removal is at once ordered by the Committee. The Sanitary Inspector ascertains during his visit that all that the necessary precautions are taken to avoid contagion and the propagation of the disease; he gives instructions as to the proper methods of disinfecting the clothing and the dejecta of the patients. He takes notes of the sex, age, time that the patient has been sick and the probable cause of the disease. At the same time, he makes a careful inspection of all the rooms in the house, looks at the condition of the drains, the closets and all conduits which are used to drain the building. He ascertains that there are no rubbish heaps, mud, or any other substance that could be injurious to the health of the residents; that the water pipes are clean, free from any danger of filtration and do not communicate with the drains; and lastly, he takes notes of all the causes of insalubrity which exist in that street, specially reporting whether the water supply pipes pass through it, and whether there is a proper sewer. On all these points, he presents

a detailed report at once, which is referred to one of the two Committees on Dwelling houses, so that in view of this document it may decide on the works which are to be executed in order to improve the hygienic conditions of the houses that have been inspected.

To the Committee on Veterinary matters, pertains the inspection of the slaughter houses, dairies and hogyards; the watchfulness over butcher shops and everything else that has reference to epizootics, with the object of avoiding their appearance and development.

The Committee on judicial matters, looks after all questions which on account of their special character are immediately connected with jurisprudence, and it also acts as an assessor to the other Committees whenever any doubt arises as to the strict application of the Law.

One of the most important dependencies of the Board is the inspection of food and drink, which is under the immediate care of the member of the Board, who has charge of the first Committee on Food. The inspection of these substances is either made directly by the analytical chemists who visit the establishments with all the requisites demanded by the laws in force, and who in every case prepare a Minute in which they set down all the incidents of the visit and the results obtained through the analysis of the inspected articles, or else by collections of samples which are taken by the agents of the inspecting Department on a special order issued by the analytical Chemists. These orders specify the class of the sample which is to be taken as well as the establishment that is to be visited. Of the substances that are collected, one part is well wrapped up and sealed and is left in the possession of the owner or Manager of the establishment, whilst the other is taken to the Chemical Laboratory and there properly analyzed. On the Minute which is made out in due form at the time of collecting the samples, the Chemist who has made the analysis notes the result, and on that same document, the Committee fixes the penalty which is to be imposed, whenever the article is found to be altered or adulterated.

The analysis which are made in the Chemical Laboratory are of such substances as milk, coffee, tea, bread, wine, beer, oil, sweets, and generally everything that is susceptible of adulteration or decomposition, as at times happens with cold meats, canned food, fish, etc. The Chemical Laboratory of the Board is set up in the same building which it occupies, and is properly provided with all the uten-

sils, re-agents, and apparata necessary for the important and delicate labors to which it is dedicated. Amongst these are the following:

- 1 Soleil and 1 Laurent Saccharimeter.
- 1 Hamagat Oleorefractometer.
- 1 Refractometer for the dosification of alcohol.
- 1 Diaphanometer and 1 Spectroscope.
- 1 Colorimeter.
- 2 Aperiodic scales and 3 sensitive to half a miligram.
- 2 Nachet microscopes.
- 1 Gypsometer.
- 1 Mercurial pneumatic machine and 1 Spout.
- 1 Soxhlet apparatus.

Reverbertory ovens and combustion furnace for the dosification of Azoe.

The application of preventive Vaccine is one of those branches to which the Board has dedicated great attention, and great zeal has been shown in the distribution of this preservative every day in the Central Office, which is situated in one of the Departments of the building occupied by the Board. The assistants to the Curator, vaccinate in the Parish Churches of the City; the Sanitary Inspectors in the Police Stations of their respective Wards; and in the outside towns of the Federal District, the vaccination is attended to by the Inspectors of those towns.

The very important disinfection service, is under the direct charge of a member of the Committee on Epidemiology, and the staff consists of a Chief, a machinist, a caretaker of the desinfected clothing, a coachman with his assistant, and four employees for the disinfection of the houses.

This disinfection is practiced in the dwellings where any case has appeared of Typhus, Typhoid, Small-pox, Scarlatina or Dyptheria.

After collecting the clothing of the patients in order to carry them off at once to the stove, the disinfection of the dwelling rooms is effected by means of the irrigation apparata, for which purpose a solution of bichloride of mercury is employed at 1 to 1000.

The disinfection of the furniture is also carried out with this solution, or better still with a solution of carbolic acid at 5 per cent. In some cases bread crumb is employed for disinfecting pictures and fine paintings.

On some occasions a solution of lime is employed for the closets and creoline for destroying bad odors.

The disinfection Department is situated in the Plazuela de San Pablo, in the immediate vicinity of the Juarez Hospital.

Amongst the apparatus with which that Department is furnished, we have:

1 Geneste and Hersecher fixed stove with an 8 Horse Power steam boiler.

1 Movable stove with 6 Horse Power steam boiler.

3 Geneste and Hersecher pulverizers for dwellings.

4 Italian pulverizers by Bordoni Ufreduzzi.

1 Japy pulverizer.

4 Pulverizers on a Mexican system, and 6 hand pulverizers.

The anti-hydrophobia inoculations are made every day by a member of the Board, who has special charge of this service. The preservation of the medulae and the preparation of the liquid for injection is carried out in the Bacteriological Laboratory, which is also established in the same building with the Board. Amongst the many labors which are executed in this Laboratory, we may specially mention the analysis of water, the examination of dyptheric products, the preparation of everything required by the Pasteur anti-rabic treatment and the preparation and application of the anti-leprous serum, of Dr. Carasquillo.

Besides the glass vessels which are necessary and the scales of different patterns, the laboratory contains the following, amongst other apparatus for sterilization and cultivation:

1 Koch dry stove.

1 Chamberlan Autoclave.

1 Koch sterilizer at ebullition point.

1 Serum Sterilizer by D'Arsonval.

1 Rohrbeck small dry stove.

1 Serum coagulator by D'Arsonval.

1 Cultivating stove on the Babes system.

1 „ „ on the D'Arsonval system.

1 „ „ on the Schribaux system.

2 Apparata for filtering gelatine and gelosa.

1 Chamberlan filter with Gay-Lussac pump.

1 „ „ with absorbing and expelling syringe.

1 Refrigerator.

1 Hydrogen Blow pipe.

1 Zeiss microscope.

1 „ „ for micro-photography.

- 1 Zeiss micro-photographic microscope.
- 1 Negrete and Zambra microscope.
- 1 Nachet microscope.
- 2 Album-carbon lamps.
- 1 Reichert microtome.

The Board publishes a monthly Bulletin, which is the organ of the corporation and care is taken to publish all the official data relating to the labors of the laboratories, the Committees of the Board, the Sanitary Medical Inspectors; the reports of Vaccine administered, of the mortality, and tables showing the disinfections that have been made and the anti-rabic inoculations that have been practiced, together with reading matter on the most essential precepts of Hygiene, with the object of spreading a knowledge on the subject.

With this object, these articles are short, clear, concise and avoid all scientific technicisms, so as to bring them within the reach of every intelligence. They are edited in turn by the Scientific staff of the Board, and the publication of the Bulletin is under the charge a special Committee and is managed by the Chief Clerk of the Secretariat.

The staff of the Secretary's office, according to the present appropriations, consists of a General Secretary, a Chief Clerk, 3 subordinate Chiefs, one of whom attends to one of the three sections into which the office is divided, for the better attendance to the business; one corresponding clerk also in charge of the archives, a Treasurer, six writing clerks, three messengers, two others for the Chemical Laboratory, one for the Bacteriological Laboratory and one Janitor.

Each section looks after a well defined branch of the business, and gives a timely attention to all questions brought before it. The third section has exclusive charge of everything that is connected with the Statistics, and this important branch of the business is being continually improved. In order to take full advantage of the work of this section, it is under the charge of a medical man. The Secretary General is also a Medical man, with the object of facilitating his attendance to technical matters, with a thorough understanding of his business.

The Supreme Board of Health occupies with its offices a large part of that ample building, that not so long ago was dedicated to the administration of the Revenues of the Federal District. This building is situated at a very short distance from the main square of the City and in a Northerly direction, in the Plaza de Juarez which was formerly known under the name of Plazuela de Santo Domingo.

The offices of the Board can be considered as divided into three principal departments: in the first, is a room dedicated to the work of the Committees, another is given up to the President, whilst an ample chamber which is decorated according to the rules of Hygiene, serves for the sessions of the Board.

The second Department contains the necessary offices and has five rooms, in which are established the three sections; the General Secretariat and the archives of the corporation. All these Departments are provided with the necessary furniture and utensils for attending to the business that comes before them.

In the third Department and separated from the others by a corridor, are the Chemical and Bacteriological Laboratories. The former is an ample and well situated room, and the second consists of several rooms in which the stoves and other utensils are conveniently distributed; each room being adapted to the character of the work or investigation to which it is dedicated. There is also a proper place for the cages of the rabbits which have been inoculated with anti-rabic serum, as well as other animals or birds which are kept for the practice of scientific experiments.

In one of the passages, a series of closets and a urinal have been established, both of which satisfy every requisite stipulated in the sewer regulations, and which can be consulted by the owners of buildings, so as to get an object lesson in the proper way to set them up in their own buildings.

On the lower floor of the same building and with a door to the Calle de la Encarnacion, are two large room which are dedicated to the application of Jenner vaccine, and the anti-rabic serum of Pasteur.

The Supreme Government of the Republic, which thoroughly comprehends the importance that civilization and science now accord to public Hygiene, gives a full support to the Supreme Board of Health, and the President of the Republic with the able and efficacious assistance of the Secretary of the Interior, takes a special and patriotic zeal in endowing this important corporation with all the resources and all the powers that are indispensable to the proper carrying out of the measures of Hygiene, which are required by the health and welfare of all the towns in the Mexican Nation.

